GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:28
ANSWERED ON:26.04.2016
Soil Health Cards
Muddahanumegowda Shri S.P.;Singh Dr. Prabhas Kumar

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has fixed any target to collect soil samples for testing and evaluation of fields of individual farmers under the grid methodology of Soil Health Card Scheme in the country, if so, the details and achievements thereof;

(b) whether the Government plans to shift from the current grid system of soil sampling as the same is a flawed system, if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor;

(c) the number of soil testing laboratories in the country along with the steps taken by the Government to improve infrastructure and capacity of such laboratories and the achievements made thereon;

(d) whether any study or randomised control trials have been conducted to assess the effectiveness of Soil Health Card Programme in improving the productivity of soil and if so, the details and the outcome thereof; and

(e) the steps taken/being taken by the Government to monitor and make the soil Health Card Scheme more effective?

Answer

MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE
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(a) to (e): A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (e) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 28 DUE FOR REPLY ON 26TH APRIL, 2016.

(a): The Government has introduced Soil Health Card (SHC) Scheme with an aim to provide Soil Health Cards (SHCs) to all farmers across the country once in a cycle of 2 years. Soil Health Cards provide farmers with recommendations on appropriate dosage of nutrients to be applied for cultivation of various crops along with soil amendments. Nationally agreed norms / standards of 10 hectares for rainfed areas and 2.5 hectare for irrigated areas constitute the grid for soil sample collection. On this basis, a total of around 2.53 crore samples will be collected and tested to generate about 14 crore soil health cards in respect of every individual farmer. Initially the plan was to collect all the samples and issue soil health cards to all the farmers once in every period of 3 years. Subsequently, the plan was revised to cover all the farmers once in every period of 2 years. Following this, the target of 253 lakh samples has been redistributed as 100 lakhs for the year 2015-16 and 153 lakhs for the year 2016-17. Against the target of 100 lakh samples for the year 2015-16, 91.14 lakh soil samples have been collected that will generate 4.55 crore soil health cards. The analysis, printing & distribution is in progress. For the year 2016-17, target for soil sample collection is 161.86 lakhs.

(b): The respective grids for both rainfed & irrigated areas has been fixed in consultation with ICAR and State Governments. This is the most representative sample collection approach adopted so far and is expected to generate truthful soil nutrient status for every farm and help to recommend appropriate nutrient management advice for different crops. This is a well accepted methodology by all the concerned stakeholders and there is currently no plan to change the same.

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(c): As on 31.03.2014, there were 1408 Soil Testing Laboratories (1135 Static and 273 Mobile) in the country. Of these 616 had facility for testing of micro-nutrients. State-wise details are given at Annexure-I. To improve infrastructure and capacity of soil testing in the country, the department has sanctioned funds for setting up of 103 Static and 77 Mobile Soil Testing Laboratories and strengthening of 269 number of existing laboratories during the years 2014-15 and 2015-16. These labs are likely to be start functioning during 2016-17. All these laboratories will have facility for testing micronutrients.

(d): In order to study the Soil Health Card Scheme and its effect on productivity of selected Kharif crops, the Department has assigned a study to institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC), Bengaluru, this study has been mandated to collect benchmark data on current nutrient management practices and to analyze the effect of soil health cards in terms of rise in production, reduction in and

balanced use of fertilizers etc. The preliminary report is expected by June-July, 2016 and the study is targeted to be completed by March, 2017.

(e): To monitor Soil Health Card Scheme, weekly video conferencing is being held in the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers' Welfare with the State Government officials. The weekly progress is monitored and necessary guidance for improvement is given. An Inter-Ministerial Monitoring Committee has been constituted which monitor the scheme once every two weeks in which representatives of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and National Informatics Centre (NIC) also participate along with Department Officials. Also, the State Governments are advised to upload the information at block & district level on the monitoring module of the Soil Health Card Portal regularly. The
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department has deployed a workflow based web portal which facilitates upload of data at different stages − sample collection, testing, soil health card generation besides enabling monitoring through MIS. Also officers from the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare are deputed to States to monitor the implementation of the Soil Health Card Scheme. The department has held regional meetings with all the States to orient the States on effective implementation of the scheme. At various meetings and conferences of the department, the Soil Health Card Scheme is discussed regularly with the States.